

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8762

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2998

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PK

SUBJ: APPROVAL OF CONSTITUTIONS OPPOSITION ROLE

REF: ISLAMABAD 2906

SUMMARY: ACCORDING OPPOSITION LEADER SHAUKAT HYAT, FIRST
STEP LEADING TO OPPOSITION DECISION END ASSEMBLY BOYCOTT
AND SUPPORT CONSTITUTION WAS APRIL 9 MEETING BETWEEN
OPPOSITION REPRESENTATIVE AND LAW MINISTER PIRZADA AT
LATTER'S INVITATION. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY INTENSIVE
NEGOTIATIONS MORNING APRIL 10 WHICH RESOLVED REMAINING
DIFFERENCES OVER CONSTITUTION AND AT WHICH BHUTTO -- WHILE
APPARENTLY NOT COMMITTING SELF TO ANY SPECIFIC ACTION --
AGREED TAKE "MAGNANIMOUS" ATTITUDE TOWARD OPPOSITION IN
BALUCHISTAN AND FRONTIER. TWO OF FIVE BALUCH MNAS (ONLY
ONES PRESENT IN CITY) SUPPORTED CONSTITUTION WHILE TWO
MORE SUBSEQUENTLY EXPRESSED THEIR APPROVAL. SHAUKAT
HYAT PRAISED CRUCIAL ROLE OF WALI KHAN IN THESE
DEVELOPMENTS AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT APPROVAL CONSTITUTION WOULD
MARK TURNING POINT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT
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AND OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY

1. PARLIAMENTARY LEADER OF UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) OPPOSITION, SHAUKAT HYAT, CALLED ON CHARGE AFTERNOON APRIL 11 TO FILL HIM IN ON DEVELOPMENTS LEADING TO DRAMATIC APRIL 10 ASSEMBLY VOTE ON CONSTITUTION AS SEEN FROM OPPOSITION SIDE.

2. ACCORDING TO SHAUKAT, FIRST STEP IN BREAKING DEADLOCK WAS APRIL 9 STATEMENT BY LAW MINISTER PIRZADA IN ASSEMBLY, CARRIED ON RADIO SAME DAY, INVITING OPPOSITION TO MEET WITH HIM THAT EVENING. AFTER BRIEF CONSULTATION AMONG OPPOSITION, PROFESSOR GHAFUOR AHMAD (JAMAAT- I- ISLAMI) CALLED ON PIRZADA. GHAFUOR' S ACCOUNT OF THEIR EVENING TALK INDICATED TO OPPOSITION THAT POSSIBILITY OF LAST MINUTE COMPROMISE ON CONSTITUTION STILL EXISTED.

3. ACCORDINGLY, SHAUKAT CONTINUED, HE, BIZENJO, GHAFUOR AND OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS MET AGAIN WITH PIRZADA AT NINE A. M. APRIL 10 IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PREMISES. AFTER HOUR AND HALF OF NEGOTIATION, THEY SUCCEEDED IN REACHING COMPROMISE ON MOST OF OPPOSITION OBJECTIONS TO CONSTITUTION. AT 10: 30 PRESIDENT BHUTTO ARRIVED AND JOINED MEETING. IN HIS PRESENCE, REMAINING POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT OVER CONSTITUTION WERE DISPOSED OF.

4. AT SHAUKAT' S REQUEST, HE AND BHUTTO THEN MET PRIVATELY FOR 45 MINUTES. ACCORDING TO SHAUKAT, HE TOLD BHUTTO THAT, WITH CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES NOW SETTLED, CHIEF REMAINING PROBLEM FOR OPPOSITION WAS QUESTION OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS IN BALUCHISTAN AND NORTH WEST FRONTIER. HE URGED BHUTTO TO RESCIND THOSE ACTIONS WHICH HAD LED TO DOWNFALL OF NAP/ JUI COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN THESE PROVINCES AND TO PERMIT RETURN TO STATUS QUO ANTE. BHUTTO REPLIED THAT COMPLETE RETURN TO STATUS QUO ANTE WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF SUBSEQUENT " COMMITMENTS" HE HAD MADE IN THESE PROVINCES. AT SHAUKAT' S URGING, HOWEVER, HE AGREED THAT HE WOULD MAKE EFFORT TO RESTORE SITUATION TO EXTENT POSSIBLE AND THAT HE WOULD TAKE " MAGNANIMOUS" ATTITUDE TOWARD OPPOSITION ON THIS ISSUE. (SHAUKAT' S ACCOUNT OF JUST WHAT BHUTTO AGREED TO WAS RATHER IMPRECISE; IT APPEARS THAT BHUTTO DID NOT ACTUALLY COMMIT HIMSELF TO ANY PARTICULAR

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ACT, BUT RATHER AGREED MERELY TO TAKE ACCOMMODATING

ATTITUDE TOWARD OPPOSITION IN THESE TWO PROVINCES.)

5. WITH THIS UNDERSTANDING FROM PRESIDENT, SHAUKAT CONTINUED, HE AND OTHERS SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING WALI KHAN TO END HIS BOYCOTT AND RETURN TO ASSEMBLY FOR FINAL VOTE ON CONSTITUTION. EVEN THEN, SHAUKAT SAID, QUESTION OF HOW OPPOSITION WOULD VOTE WAS UNSETTLED; OPPOSITION AT THAT POINT HAD AGREED ONLY TO RETURN TO ASSEMBLY AND VOTE ON CONSTITUTION IN ACCORDANCE EACH MEMBER'S INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE.

6. OPPOSITION THEN STAGED THEIR DRAMATIC RETURN TO ASSEMBLY. WHEN FINAL VOTE ON CONSTITUTION WAS REACHED, SHAUKAT WAS FIRST OPPOSITION FIGURE TO RISE FROM HIS SEAT TO RECORD FAVORABLE VOTE. HE WAS JOINED BY BIZENJO, AND THEN, AFTER SOME HURRIED URGING, WALI KHAN ROSE. THIS, SHAUKAT SAID, WAS THE CRUCIAL MOMENT. WITH WALI'S VOTE IN FAVOR, REST OF OPPOSITION (WITH SOLE EXCEPTION OF NOORANI OF JUP) AGX FELL IN LINE. ONLY OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT WHO DID NOT VOTE IN FAVOR OF CONSTITUTION WERE COUPLE OF MAVERICK PPP MEMBERS. UNDER PROCEDURES IN EFFECT, SHAUKAT POINTED OUT, LATTER WERE COUNTED AS ABSTAINING RATHER THAN VOTING AGAINST CONSTITUTION. OF FIVE BALUCHISTAN MNA'S ONLY TWO WERE PRESENT IN CITY ON APRIL 10 AND BOTH VOTED IN FAVOR OF CONSTITUTION. SINCE THE VOTE, SHAUKAT HAD RECEIVED APPROVING TELEPHONE CALLS FROM BOTH THE LADY MNA FROM BALUCHISTAN AND FORMER BALUCH CHIEF MINISTER MENGAL.

7. SHAUKAT WAS LAVISH IN HIS PRAISE OF WALI KHAN'S ROLE. NOT ONLY DID WALI OVERCOME HIS RESERVATIONS TOWARD CONSTITUTION BUT HE ALSO WENT TO LENGTH OF VIOLATING " PUKHTUNWALI" (I. E., PATHAN CUSTOM) BY MEETING WITH AND SUPPORTING MAN WHO HAS BEEN " RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLING OF PATHANS" ONLY FEW WEEKS EARLIER DURING MARCH 23 FRACAS AT RAWALPINDI.

8. SHAUKAT EXPRESSED FERVENT HOPE THAT LAST- MINUTE AGREEMENT ON CONSTITUTION HAD MARKED TURNING POINT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION. HE POINTED OUT THAT NAP, IN PARTICULAR, SHARED MOST OF GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES --
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MODERATE SOCIALISM, RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH, RECONCILIATION WITH INDIA -- AND THAT ONLY FACTOR HOLDING THEM APART WAS GOVERNMENT'S UNENDING VENDETTA AGAINST WALI AND HIS PARTY. WHILE CONTINUING EXPRESS PLEASURE OVER DEVELOPMENTS, SHAUKAT CONCLUDED BY SOUNDING NOTE OF CONCERN. HE

ALLEGED BHUTTO HAD AGREED TO CONTACT HIM THAT SAME DAY
BUT SO FAR HAD FAILED TO DO SO.
SOBER

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